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UNCLAS HELSINKI 000015

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: FINNISH AID IN SUPPORT OF TSUNAMI RELIEF EFFORT

REF: STATE 00959

1. (SBU) The Government of Finland is about to increase its total disaster assistance donation to 12 million euros. GoF donations have increased over the past week to keep slightly ahead of private donations. End Summary

2. (U) Embassy Helsinki made subject demarche immediately on the morning of January 4, 2005.

3. (U) On December 27, 2004, the GoF made its first contribution of 500,000 euros through the Finnish Red Cross to the IFRC. On December 29, as the scope of the disaster became better known, and private donations grew, the GoF added another 2 million euros: one million to the WFP, 500,000 to UNICEF and 500,000 to the WHO. On December 31, the GoF gave another two million euros to the IFRC, through the Finnish Red Cross. All of the current 4.5 million euros have been disbursed.

4. (U) The GoF has already set aside another 5.5 million euros in expectation of a UN aid request on Thursday, January 6. Officials expect to allocate and disburse the amount as soon as the requests are in.

5. (SBU) Although not yet announced, MFA sources tell us that the GoF will increase the current total of 10 million euros to 12 million euros by the end of the week.

6. (U) Donations by the Finnish public stand at just below 11 million euros as of the morning of January 4, 2005, with the amount constantly rising. The bulk of this amount goes to the Finnish Red Cross (8.6 million) and Finnish Church Aid - the Lutheran Church's aid organization (1.1 million). Finnish UNICEF has received 750,000, Finnish Save the Children Fund 250,000, and two smaller organizations received another 120,000.

7. (SBU) While sympathetic to the tsunami relief effort, MFA humanitarian assistance officials nervously watch as the aid figure grows to 12 million euros, now more than one quarter of Finland's total humanitarian assistance budget for 2005.

8. (U) Statistical note: Although Finland is a relatively developed country, it is tiny. Finnish GDP is less than 1.5 percent of the U.S. GDP.

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